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## Life Betrayed

**Jayanthi Papa Rao**  
**Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**

It was six @ dawn.

I opened newspaper pages and began to see. The calling bell rang and I saw a person at the gate with a bundle of newspapers.

"Sir, excuse me!"

"No excuse..notime..I don't want any paper.."

"Sir, Sir! One minute sir! I am from fourth estate sir! Please subscribe for at least three months sir! I am a postgraduate without any employment. If I promote sales, I will get some job sir. I and my family will be grateful to you sir! ..." He continued and I was compelled to subscribe. The days of my unemployment appeared before me painning me in my mind.

I opened the pages and found them full of advertisements under various categories.If you buy one, you will get two... If you buy two, you will get five...Don't miss the opportunity, you will get 25% extra... If you want to change your life style, please contact no...If you want to make your children doctors or engineers or IAS, contact no... So many and countless ads! My head began to ache!

I looked at the politics page and found full of allegations!

"You are corrupt..."

"No, you are corrupt ..."

"You have looted public money in crores! I will prove it! Come for public discussion! I will show you proof!"

"What was your wealth when you entered politics? What is it now? I will prove wherefrom and how you looted with documents!"

The page is full with such allegations! My mind refused to see it further and I threw it aside!

It was seven @ morning.

I switched on the T.V. for morning news. Two minutes news! Five minutes live show of advertisements! Music..sounds.. shouts.. live talks.. traps!..honeytraps..news...unauthorized and illegal occupations of public and private lands..corruptions.. lootings..robberies.. rapes.. suicides

of small farmers, weavers and others.. I shut down the T.V. and breathed a sigh! A grim glimpse in my mind. Do we live like human beings? If not, why?

I was trying to contact my friends, but could not! There were ten missed messages and I read them... Win Rs one lakh with one word!..I am Priya. Contact. I am available day and night, just a call!.. I am Anitha, contact, make your life green and happy..One thousand young and charming girls with musical accent and cheers available always, contact... My mind reacted within! Nature creates. Woman creates. Nature is woman. Woman is Nature. Is all this not a blemish and insult to human race, woman and humanity?! Why the woman is subjected to inhuman torture, violence and terrorism from and by all sides?!

It was eight@morning.

I had my bath and sat in the hall with the cell phone in my hand to contact our friends. We had some important and urgent work to attend together. Calling bell was continuously ringing and I could not contact my friends. A smart person around twenty five years with glittering eyes and smiling lips began to talk." Sir, Sir, Sir! Please try this new product. It's market price is RS.135 / per kg. For sales promotion, I give it for Rs 100/ only! I did M.B.A. from a prestigious Institute and I do not want to depend for a job on Government or others and began my own business. I do not feel shy of going from door to door for sales! This new product will create a new man in you and a new world for you!" So saying he put five packets before me and stood up for Rs. 500/. My days of unemployment began to lash in my mind and I paid him the amount. He shook my hand and proceeded to next door.

My wife examined them turning round and round and began her lesson. "It is a fake product! You did higher education, but do not use your brain! Why did you buy them without telling me?! I warned you several times, but you are all times fooled because you believe every one!... .." She continued it for over thirty minutes! Reading and reading columnists lessons, I lost interest in reading! Similarly, hearing and hearing my wife's lessons, my mind refuses to hear her, but I pretend that I hear her lessons like music!

It was nine@ morning.

I heard my wife calling me. "Please come and have your tiffin; A new product today! Enjoy eating! Why do you waste your valuable time reading political news? All political parties without any exception, in our great democracy have one and only one policy, that is, policy of opportunity for political power and thereby easy wealth! "

"What a fun! It is 'Upma' only which I eat more than twenty mornings in a month along with your lessons! How is it a new product?!"

"What do you mean by new product? Old product with new taste! That is why and how we live married life together for decades! "She laughed heavily and I smiled soulfully within myself.

Suddenly, I heard repeated alarms and peeped through the window chewing the new product and saw a team of five gentle men appeared to be of around seventy at the gate. They looked as if they were dedicated to a great social cause. I washed my hands and mouth without delay and rushed to them.

"Sir, we took up the task of building an 'Ashramamu' for the old. Please see the list of persons who joined us paying as much as possible, but not less than Rs 5000/" each. Hope you will also join us for this great cause."

I found my close friend's name in the list and took up the phone to contact him. They took out the list from my hand and ran out hurriedly!

"I think that these men have also fooled and cheated you!"

"No, my friend has saved me!" She laughed with all the happiness!

It was ten@morning.

I held the phone and was trying to contact my friends, but couldn't! My wife came upon me like whirlwind and began to rain words! "You are retired, no work to do, no earning! The phone is in your hand from six! How many persons you have contacted? How much you pay for the calls! You have free life! Indian woman has no retirement; she spends her whole life in the service of the whole family till her last breath! The servant maid has not yet come. Give me the phone, I will contact her."

I could not keep silent and opened my mouth gently and smoothly "please stop your lesson for a moment and listen to me. I have spent my life in enslavement from the beginning of my education till the day of my retirement! No free life at all! I was enslaved to education till I was twenty five, to employment till the day of my retirement, meanwhile to you from the day of

marriage and then to the children from the day of their birth! The sufferings, troubles, insults, problems and many such things I faced in discharging my responsibilities sincerely are countless and cannot be said in words! I want to live a free life now after my retirement! Why are you jealous and intolerant of my free life?!"

"Then, what about free life for me?"

When I was about to reply her, I heard repeated sounds at the gate and looked at it. A beggar stood there hitting iron gate with the stick in his hand. I gave him a five rupee coin. He looked at it angrily and said "what can I get with it? Keep it with you" and threw the coin on the floor. He moved forward a few feet scolding me and waited there for a minute! Money owns a force more powerful than any force in the world. Then, he walked back, took the coin and moved to the next door.

It was twelve @ noon.

We sat for lunch and I heard repeated alarms and a shouting "Sir, electrical meter reading ". I washed my hands and mouth and opened the lock. He took the readings for the three meters, put the printed slips in my hand and said " we take three rupees for each meter, please pay me rupees ten".

"Why should I pay you? Don't you get salary?" I asked him looking at his face and saw tears in his eyes. I paid him and he said wiping out his tears" Sir, I spent twenty five years of my life and rupees ten lakhs and got M.Com. degree and also learnt computer applications! No job! My employer does not pay me any salary and says "I have given you an opportunity to earn! Take rupees three for each bill from the consumer and that is your salary! No doubt, it is a form of begging!". I could not eat food enjoying it.

It was two @ afternoon.

I just finished my lunch and washed my hands and mouth. Alarm calls! Two purohits came on a motorcycle and stood at the door. One looked like 'Vasishta Maharishi' and the other like "Viswamitra Maharishi'. Their dress code indicated that they were highly learned. They said" we perform 'Puja' with your 'Nama and Gotra' before sunrise for thirty days in the sacred and ancient Temple of 'Shiva' on the occasion of 'Kartikamasamu'. It would relieve you and all your family members from all your sufferings and bless you all with all the happiness! It is a service

to the sufferers. We take one thousand one hundred and sixteen rupees only just to meet the expenses of 'Puja'. I was highly impressed and requested them to recite some lines of the Shlokas. They did it and I pointed out there were six errors in their recitation!. They quickly went out and drove away on the motorcycle! They were disguised purohiths!

It was three@ afternoon.

I took up my phone and began my efforts to contact my friends. Great, a friend came in contact!

"I have been trying to contact you from early morning hours, are you so busy!"

"No, not all! My wife, that is your sister, talks on phone for over fifty minutes in an hour! I saw the missed calls, but no chance for me to contact!"

"I will gift you another most modern cell phone!"

"No, no, no please! If you do it, she talks over one hundred minutes in an hour! You know that I am a professor of mathematics! "

Our talk was cut and I was not surprised!

Within minutes, a girl came running to my house crying and shouting. She was so much in fear that she could not open her mouth and talk! I gave her a glass of lemon water and made her sit comfortably. There is a ferocious dog in my neighbor's house and I thought that it followed her. I looked at his house and the dog was kept chained.

She said recovering normal breathing "That rogue has seen all the products brought for sale..he did not buy anything..he caught hold of my hand saying that he will pay rupees a thousand!.. I did M.Sc. in chemistry! Is it to become a call girl?!"

He overheard her words and came to me wishing. He is a highly qualified young and unmarried industrialist. "Uncle sir! Sales girls often come and visit our houses for selling. Several times, I asked them and they obliged! I paid them a thousand rupees each time. They accepted it and went out happily! As sales girls, they get only four hundred rupees for eight hours to make sales walking from door to door under the hot sun! I did not do anything wrong with this sales girl! I have just asked her! I am surprised why she is crying and shouting for nothing!"he said and went back to his house.

I took her in my car and dropped her at her home. Her sick mother was waiting for her at the gate. She thanked me a lot depressed and in low voice.

It was six @ evening.

Life Betrayed!

**About the Author:**

**Jayanthi Papa Rao** (Born in 1938 in Andhra Pradesh, India) has published over a hundred short stories, a novel and six research books in Telugu and in English a novel and a collection of 25 short stories. He also edited and published four collections of short stories and essays based on the literature written by well-known writers. His novel and stories were translated to Hindi, English and Malayalam and research for M.Phil; PhD; and D. Litt degrees was carried out and published. He has made his writings available to readers through his blog <https://jayanthipaparao.blogspot.in>